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AUTHOR Illera, Juanita
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ABSTRACT

The author discusses two essential ingredients of a school program for behaviorally handicapped adolescents--the work experience program and group evaluation meetings. It is noted that these components help to provide experiences and develop behaviors that are relevant to the world of work and meet the unique needs of the young adolescent population. (IM)

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A Model Program For Disturbed Adolescents In A Day Facility: Necessary Modifications.

alternate title: Two Essential Ingredients of a Model Program for Seriously Behaviorally Handicapped Adolescents.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Juanita Illera

I had been scheduled to speak about a "Day Program-Necessary Modifications" I'd like to revise that title to;" A Day Program--Two Essential Ingredients".

I plan to describe briefly two ingredients of a program for seriously behaviorally handicapped youth. These ingredients are: simulated work experiences and group evaluation meetings.

I'm talking about a population of children between the ages of 12 and 15 who are too young for the traditional vocational programs and who don't have the requisite adjustment skills for those few prevocational programs which may be available.

Unfortunately it's been my experience that public school programs for this age group and exceptionality are usually piecemeal and amount to 1 or 2 special classes stressing academic remediation in a setting that bears no resemblance to what the child will be doing when he leaves school.

I am using the pronoun "he" to refer to a population which, while largely male, contains an increasing number of females.

We think of adolescence as the time of transition from childhood to adulthood; usually a time of considerable psychological turmoil and upheaval. The adolescent is faced with pressures for educational and vocational achievement at the same time as delay in the process of attainment (Joint Commission on Mental Health, 1970).

We say this is the time when a youth begins to find his identity largely through the development of his own competence and independence; a time to test out values, skills and choices. If he has been able to achieve adequately in the school environment and has acquired the adjustment skills necessary for that setting, he is in a good position to move into the world of work having many of the requisite behaviors for success.

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For the youth for whom school has been a negative experience, who has not acquired the adjustment skills needed for success in that setting, the future looms as a bleak uncertainty, with little hope for prolonged successful involvement. These youth have failed to meet the standards set by society for them, the standard of achieving in school.

Looking more closely at this population we see individuals who are hostile and unruly or passive and apathetic (Karnes, 1965). They are reluctant to attempt school-like tasks because of fear of failure (McGahan, 1965, Friedman, 1966). They have poor powers of concentration and cannot focus attention on learning (Friedman, 1965; Grimmitt, 1969). Their attendance is poor---in fact, attendance is seen as a good measure of program effectiveness since this type of student tends to form the bulk of the drop out population. These students are of average or below average intelligence, and are low in reading, grammar and spelling (Friedman, 1965). They have difficulty getting along with others, tease, intimidate and inflict physical violence and are unable to accept constructive criticism (Friedman, 1965; Grimmitt, 1969).

Other characteristics of this population are that they have grown to mistrust others, have no significant adult models, use the peer group as primary emotional support, have often been forced to grow overly dependent upon overly controlling maternal figures who haven't permitted them to develop a sense of self-reliance (Karnes, 1965; Friedman, 1965).

These youth live primarily in the present, lack planfulness and are unable to defer immediate needs for larger rewards (McGahan, 1965; Karnes, 1965; Friedman, 1965). They have difficulty accepting responsibility for their behavior (Friedman, 1965).

We educators want these characteristics to change but we don't provide programs adequate to accomplish this.

In fact most special classes end abruptly between elementary and junior high school. Programs specifically designed to meet the unique needs of adolescent boys are rare, and it seems that high school's most effective program for pupils over 16 years of age is exclusion (Long, 1971).

Programs are desperately needed to help bridge the gap between adolescence and adulthood--that will enable the youth to make this transition as successfully as possible.

Nicholas Hobbs (1974), has repeatedly stressed that there must be experiences within the familiar and structured setting of the school that resemble the experiences the youth will encounter when he leaves school.

These youth who are having severe school adjustment problems need a more relevant work-related experience while still in school in order to acquire those behaviors which will be necessary for employability once they leave.

For these youth who are alienated and isolated as a result of inadequate skills and behaviors, such a program would have as its goal to increase the positive involvement of the youth with their school, their families and with their community.

Additional goals would be the improvement of self-concept and social skills, increase in academic level, development of a vocational identity and increased attendance.

Simulated work experience programs such as I am about to describe have been used successfully in sheltered workshops and programs for retarded youth and adults (Leshner, 1965; Snyderman, 1965), and there have been a few programs of this type used with older, delinquent adolescents (Karnes, 1965), yet very limited work has been done with the younger behaviorally handicapped adolescent.

The school program for these academically and behaviorally handicapped youth is developed in line with the findings of the Joint Commission on the Mental Health of children, that many students who have a history of grade and subject failure, rather than experiencing continued failure, drop out of school, only to repeat the same pattern in their working life experiences. They bring this attitude of failure with them which adds to their employment handicaps.

Therefore the simulated work experiences program emphasizes the establishment of a work identity early in adolescence before hopelessness, negative attitudes toward the world of work and undesirable identity development have taken place.

In their Challenge for the 70's, the Joint Commission on Mental Health viewed work as beneficial in terms of developing the adolescent's sense of self-respect, accomplishment and competency, the management of time and sense of responsibility to outside authority and valuable in developing an appropriate understanding of and orientation toward work.

If these youth are going to get the help they need to restore purpose to their lives and to gain a sense of the future, the educational setting must resemble the environment in which they will eventually have to use their acquired knowledge. This will aid them in learning effectively and efficiently (Joint Commission on Mental Health, 1970; Hobbs, 1974).

There is need to eliminate the artificial separation between the academic areas and the occupational areas if school is to be relevant to life today and relevant for the future of the student.

In fact, some educators feel that the most therapeutic element in any educational setting is the ability of a youngster to accomplish something at which he formerly would have failed--something so valuable, moreover, that someone is willing to pay him for it (Berkowitz, 1974).

Leshner and Snyderman in 1966, in studying the job seeking patterns of disadvantaged youth found them to possess limited developmental and life experiences. They also were unable to relate middle class norms to their survival needs.

Therefore the simulated work experience program is structured to provide guided developmental sequences through which the individual can integrate his emotional resources.

The program for these academically and behaviorally handicapped students begins with simple work tasks in which they are helped to develop increased tolerance for work and social stresses and to acquire behavior patterns which enable them to accommodate to discipline and to cope with competitive employment.

These students are paid to do work on a contract basis for the school. Earnings are based on such criteria as attendance, production and quality of work. Student employes receive time cards on which they clock in each day. They are given information regarding salary benefits and bonuses. Wages are computed at the end of each day and paid by check every two weeks. Checks are cased by the employer.

Emphasis of the experience is placed on industrial processes and teamwork. A variety of tasks are given, ranging from those involving extensive physical movement to tasks requiring the employe to sit at a fixed work station. At the beginning of each job contract, the student employe is given a job profile which indicates the job title, general description, job activites and personal characteristics. He also receives an evaluation

sheet indicating the specific behaviors on which he will be evaluated and the basis on which his earnings will be computed. These evaluation sheets include personal-social behaviors as well as work-related behaviors and more traditionally academic behaviors.

For example, a contract received regarding some basic home maintenance beginning with painting, would include reading worksheets describing the various types of brushes, solvents and other materials needed for the completion of the painting task. Such worksheets would contain instructions requiring students to focus, identify, select and discriminate.

The information they acquire in this preliminary task would build directly into the subsequent parts of the operation and on to the finished project.

Such work-related behaviors as sitting in a chair, listening to directions, following instructions and asking for help in an appropriate manner would be observed and evaluated. Also, general appearance, leaving the area, refusing to work, and sitting idle, are recorded and figure into the final wage received. Since the job is being done on a contract basis, there would be need for a supply clerk who would perform activities in receiving and storing, sorting and stock inventory, checking supplies, keeping business records and making phone contacts. Each aspect of the supply clerks job would be specified and rated. Use of the telephone, for example, would involve answering and responding, requesting information and relaying a message. The job would be handled by one or two students until the contract is complete.

Obviously such a program as the simulated work experience requires a tremendous amount of planning, organization and effort on the part of the adults in the program. Task analysis would be used to break down each task into developmental sequences.

Fortunately, there are some curriculum guides to such programs but the many hours of planning to make the program work for a particular group of students must be made available. This means that all who are involved with the program must see themselves as part of the process and integral to the total operation, not working independently or in isolation from the others. And it is helpful if such staff are selected not only because of their specific academic training but also because of their emotional stability, respect for the individual, consistency, flexibility and ability to work as a member of a team--also, this group of teachers must be highly committed to the goals and objectives of the program.

and the program itself should be small enough for all this to be viable.

And last but not least, TIME, repeated here for emphasis. Adequate time has got to be built in to the schedule for inter-staff communication!

The second essential ingredient of a program for seriously behaviorally handicapped adolescents is that of the Group Evaluation Meeting. This meeting is based on Glasser's model of a class meeting. It is held daily, at a regularly scheduled time and has a consistent format on which the student can rely.

These meetings are the backbone of the program.

Whereas in the simulated work experience the student is functioning in a carefully planned, highly structured environment, in the Group Evaluation meeting, while still maintaining a structured format, we are able to see more clearly to what extent the positive behaviors demonstrated in the work setting have actually internalized and also which negative behaviors have been recognized and seen as undersirable, and worthy of change.

In other words, the student becomes actively involved in a process of achieving cognitive control. Since so many of the students we are working with are impulse ridden and lack inner controls, the student's gradual awareness of his behavior, how it functions (both positively and negatively) and how it can change process. Peer support- or peer pressure- is utilized to encourage positive behavior and to reinforce attempts at positive behavior change.

In the group evaluation meeting the work of the day is discussed by each student in turn. This will involve mention of areas which he thinks are going well and areas which are presenting problems. The areas of success are noted and encouraged. Feedback is elicited from each group member in turn.

Problem areas are looked at with the idea of goal setting. A single goal is identified for a week and only those behaviors which are readily observable are selected for change.

At each meeting the goal is reviewed, progress evaluated and alternative behaviors suggested. For example, a student who selected the goal of not fighting, first reviews areas of positive behavior and is positively reinforced by each student. Then the student in focus will name the goal that he selected, and indicate whether or not it was achieved. If the answer is yes, the other

members of the group are asked to comment on whether or not they feel the goal was achieved. If the answer is no they have to provide a specific reason. The student then re-evaluates the goal and re-states it or sets another.

Goals and the process of goal setting are part of the wage earning program, with specific group behaviors such as not interrupting others, not laughing at others, listening actively, and not talking when someone else is, being observed and reinforced.

Through this group process the student employes are focusing on their own behavior, developing responsibility for both their positive and negative behaviors and making a commitment toward behavior change. In addition, the student is not doing this alone, or just in union with the adult, he is working with the group of people that makes up his work environment. The youth can thus begin to see himself as interrelated with his environment--and gradually gain some awareness as to how his behavior affects the environment and is, in turn, being affected by it. This awareness emerges through the feedback, reinforcement, disagreement, and support of the other group members.

In summary, then the work experience program and group evaluation meeting are two essential ingredients of a school program for the behaviorally handicapped youth. These two ingredients assist in providing experiences and developing behaviors that are truly relevant to the world of work, a world toward which these young people are moving with frightening rapidity.

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JOB PROFILE

Job Title:	Stand Operator (Manager
Job Group:	Sales
General Description:	Performs activities in receiving and storing.
Job Activities:	Rack or shelve stock
	General cleaning
	Wrap packages
	Sort stock
	Count money (make change)
	Inventory stock
	Order supplies
	Use telephone
	Keep business records

Personal Characteristics:

1) Sociability and expression -- involves constant interaction with public.

2) Good grooming and personal appearance.

EVALUATION SHEET

Directions: Please check ( ) in the space provided the appropriate check ( ) acquired knowledge of subject covered to Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory degree.

Level I	Simple Application of Academic Skills	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
	Use of Telephone:		
	answering & responding		
	requesting information		
	relaying message		
Level II	Simple Work Related Skills		
	Money:		
	coin recognition		
	combinations for various amounts		
	making small change		

TASK BEHAVIOR OBSERVATION RECORD

Student:_____ Month:_____

Time Interval / Each Occurrence

Task Behavior	Day 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
On time - In Work Area_____ (Cite Time)										
Hair - Combed										
Dress - Free of Soil										
Cleanliness - No Body Odor										
Working on Task										
Leaving Work Area										
Sleeping Eyes Closed - Head Down										
Talking to Fellow Students										
Complaining about Task										
Saying I Can't and Won't (Refusing Instructions)										
Sitting Idle - Hands Not Busy										
Trips to Rest Room Requested										